

transmitted in a high degree of preciseness.

The image encoder of the present invention may have the structure wherein each structural element is realized using a dedicated circuit. The image encoder of the present invention may comprise a general-purpose microprocessor and a memory unit, and a program for controlling the microprocessor to realize the functions of the structural elements may be executed. Otherwise, some of the entire structural elements may be realized using a dedicated circuit, while the rest of the structural elements are realized by the general-purpose microprocessor under the control of a program. In such a structure, a processor for certain purposes may be employed in place of the general-purpose processor, inside the image encoder of the present invention.

In the case where the image encoder of the present invention is incorporated into a computer, such as a personal computer, etc. A part or the entire structural elements of the image encoder may be realized using a program which is executing by a processor included in the computer.

In the case where the program for realizing the functions of the above-described structural elements is executed by a computer, such as the microprocessor, the processor for certain purposes, the personal computer or the like, the program may be written in a ROM, or stored on a medium and installed into the computer. The above program may be posted on a BBS (Bulletin Board System) on a network or on a Web page, and distributed through a network. Data signals representing the program embedded in a carrier wave may be encoded, and the encoded signals in the carrier wave may be transmitted. Then, a device or system receiving this encoded signals may decode the received signals so as to restore the program.

Various embodiments and changes may be made thereonto without departing from the broad spirit and scope of the invention. The above-described embodiments are intended to illustrate the present invention, not to limit the scope of the present invention. The scope of the present invention is shown by the attached claims rather than the

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embodiments. Various modifications made within the meaning of an equivalent of the claims of the invention and within the claims are to be regarded to be in the scope of the present invention.

This application is based on Japanese Patent Application No. 2000-316229 filed on 5 October 17, 2000, and including specification, claims, drawings and summary. The disclosure of the above Japanese Patent Application is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.